



NRC NEWS

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NRC SCHEDULES PUBLIC MEETING FOR MAY 5 TO DISCUSS PALISADES NUCLEAR POWER PLANT PERFORMANCE AND NRC OVERSIGHT

Nuclear Regulatory Commission officials have scheduled a public meeting for Thursday, May 5, to discuss the agency's assessment of safety performance for last year at the Palisades Nuclear Power Plant and other NRC oversight activities.

The Palisades facility with one reactor unit is operated by Entergy Nuclear Palisades LLC. It is located about 5 miles south of South Haven, Mich.

The meeting, which will be open to the public, is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m. EDT at the Lake Michigan College, 125 Veteran Blvd., South Haven. The NRC staff will discuss the results of the 2010 assessment with Entergy representatives, talk about the NRC and its range of activities, and be available to respond to questions or comments from the public before the close of the meeting.

"The NRC continually reviews the performance of the Palisades facility and the nation's other commercial nuclear power facilities," said NRC Region III Administrator Mark Satorius. "This meeting allows us to discuss our annual assessment of safety performance with members of the local community. The goal of this meeting is to explain how the NRC works to protect people and the environment and to answer questions from residents about nuclear regulation."

A letter sent from the NRC Region III office to plant officials addressed the performance of the plant during 2010 and will serve as the basis for the discussion. It is available on the NRC Web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/pali_2010q4.pdf.

Overall, the NRC found that the Palisades facility operated safely in 2010.

The NRC uses color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to assess nuclear plant performance. The colors start with "green" and then increase to "white," "yellow" or "red," commensurate with the safety significance of the issues involved. Performance indicators are statistical measurements of plant and equipment performance.

All performance indicators and inspection findings for Palisades during 2010 were determined to be “green.”

In 2009 the Palisades plant had one “white” finding involving the degradation of neutron absorbing material in plates surrounding fuel assemblies in the spent fuel storage pool. The NRC conducted an inspection of this issue in September 2010 and considers that the utility has taken or plans adequate corrective actions. As a result of these inspection findings, the “white” finding was closed. Even with the degradation, the spent fuel remained in a stable condition because soluble boron was also in the storage pool to ensure that the safety function was met.

With the resolution of the spent fuel pool issue, Palisades will receive the detailed inspection regime required for plants that are operating well and require no additional oversight.

Inspections are performed by two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant and by inspection specialists from the Region III Office in Lisle, Ill., and the agency’s headquarters in Rockville, Md. In addition to the day-to-day inspections by the resident inspectors, areas of plant operations being inspected this year include in-service inspection of safety equipment and systems, radiation protection, emergency preparedness, and dry cask spent fuel storage.

The most current performance information for Palisades is available on the NRC website at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/PALI/pali_chart.html.

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